On Diarrhœa.

This is a term derived from a Greek word signifying to flow through, and is the name of a morbid affection defined by writers, a preternatural increase of the peristaltic motion of the bowels. But the disease is produced by so many causes, and is so diversified according to the difference of these causes, that no precise definition calculated to embrace every species of it, can be laid down.

Cullen, and others have endeavoured to distinguish it from Dysentery with which it is most apt to be confounded, by stating, that, Diarrhœa is not contagious, is generally without fever, has evacuations tho' not perfectly natural, yet, more so than Dysentery, and is attended by much less tormina, and tenesmus. All this is true (says Dr Chapman) as a general rule, but take the most aggravated form of the one, and the mildest of the other, and they will be found so much alike in all their leading characteristics as hardly to be distinguished.

It differs from Cholera (according to Dr Cullen) chiefly in its causes, which in Cholera are of one peculiar kind, in Diarrhœa prodigiously diversified, also by the discharge down-

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wards in the former, being of bilious matter, accompanied by vomiting of the same. This account however I am inclined to believe is incorrect, as I have frequently seen Cholera produced by causes which are well known to produce Diarrhœa, as the eating of fruit, &c, and he himself afterwards states, that, Diarrhœa is sometimes attended with vomiting, and that too of bile.

Diarrhœa is confined to no particular climate, or country, but is familiar to the medical men of every section of the Globe. It is incident to every period of life, from infancy to extreme old age. When it attacks young persons it is by no means so dangerous as when, those more advanced in life. Its debilitating effects are not so rapid in them, and its cure more easily effected. Sometimes the disease comes on very gradual, at others sudden, & not unfrequently degenerates into Dysentery. It sometimes alternates with other diseases, especially Rheumatism, and this is more usually the case when it arises from cold.

It is stated by Dr Dewar, that in some cases of Diarrhœa there is a predisposition in the system to the disease, which only wants an exciting cause to develop it, or bring it into action, and as the same causes are frequently seen to produce different diseases

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I am inclined to believe he is correct. This I think is exemplified in the circumstance of checked perspiration producing in some cases fever, in others Diarrhœa. Why it produces the one in preference to the other, can I think be accounted for only, on this principle. A predisposition is formed frequently by that debility which follows acute diseases, especially certain forms of fevers. Excessive heat is another of these causes, particularly where the patient is unaccustomed to it.

Diarrhœa is divided by Nosologists into Idiopathic, and Symptomatic. The first is produced by substances taken into the stomach, and acting either by their quantity, or quality. By matters poured into the cavity of the intestines by the excretories opening into them. By mucous matter from the mucous follicles of the intestines. By changes of food, and water. By relaxation, and debility of the alimentary canal, and numerous other causes which would be useless for me to enumerate.

The second division embraces those causes which act on the alimentary canal through the medium of the general system. These are cold applied to the surface, checking perspiration, vehement passion, excessive fatigue, &c.

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Symptomatic Diarrhœa is produced by other diseases, as Gout, Rheumatism, Phthisis Pulmonalis, &c.

Symptoms. These are, a murmuring noise, and flatulence in the intestines, accompanied by a sense of weight, and uneasiness in the lower part of the belly, usually preceding each discharge. The stools are thinner, more copious, and the desire to evacuate them more frequent, than in health. As the disease advances the stomach becomes affected, and nausea, sickness, and vomiting sometimes occur, the skin becomes dry, the countenance pale, and dejected, and when it continues violent for any length of time, great prostration of strength, and emaciation of the body, are its invariable concomitants.

In commencing the treatment of this disease, two indications always present themselves. The first is to remove the morbid causes. The second to check intestinal action, by allaying irritation, and imparting tone to the bowels.

In order to meet these indications, it is the practice of many Physicians to administer a purge. Dr Chapman, & others however, think that an emetic should always precede the purgative; after they have sufficiently evacuated the stomach, and

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intestines, it is usual, to administer some Diaphoretic medicine, in which Opium should always be an ingredient. If any fever exist, venesection should be resorted to. This, in general, aided by some of the astringent medicines is applicable to most of the simple forms of the disease.

But when it proceeds from debility, or relaxation of the alimentary canal, which form is most commonly to be met with among persons, who, from extreme old age, or other causes, are emaciated, and infirm; a different plan of treatment is necessary. Here the various Tonics, and astringent medicines are, alone to be administered.

Among the first of these is the Galls either alone, or in combination, the latter mode according to the following formula is most highly recommended by Dr Chapman,

℞. Strong infusion of Galls ℥ iv
Prepared chalk ℥ iij
Laudanum —— ʒ i m. The dose of this mixture, is, a table spoonful every two, or three hours.

The next of the vegetable astringents to the Galls is Kino. Which may be used either in substance, in watery infusion, or in tincture.

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Most practitioners prefer giving it in the recent state, but I have seen fluids the tincture from [illegible] to the annexed formula is decidedly better.

℞ Tinct. of Kino, and

prepared chalk aa ʒ iv

cinnamon ℥ss gtt

water ℥ iv The dose the same as the above preparation.

It is an astringent in the form of the disease. Tannic acid has been much employed by the physicians of Paris. It is given in the form of a powder, the dose from half a drachm to an ounce every hour or two and cold infusions very [illegible] at a time. Astringents are useless.

With respect to the relative merits of these remedies as we have several which are remarkably suited to the case under consideration. Of these the Kino is decidedly the most efficacious, it is given in strong decoction of the root in doses of a wine glass full every two or three hours.

The value of this remedy has been exemplified in several cases, which in a few days rose to wine [illegible] above

[illegible] lady gentleman in Virginia who had for a [illegible] been afflicted with this disease, and after having tried [illegible] in this case in vain was completely cured by a decoction of this valuable plant. [illegible] thought of by Dr Chapman whose opinion is always [illegible] the [illegible] respect, and under his recommendation [illegible] acquainted with its virtues. I should administer it, with the most sanguine expectations of success.

[illegible] Black [illegible] a remedy of nearly [illegible] efficacy [illegible] manner.

The next of our indigenous plants to the above is the [illegible] foot or spotted geranium. This has been much used, and [illegible] New England Practitioners. This remedy I have never seen used, tho' I have no doubt of its efficacy. The root is the part used, and is prepared by being boiled in milk. The dose [illegible] opinion [illegible]

[illegible] ingents are of great [illegible] preparations [illegible] but as they are more [illegible] I shall defer saying any thing about them at [illegible]

[illegible] that form of the disease.

When a tendency arises from cutaneous perspiration in consequence of exposure to cold and moisture [illegible] to restore the cutaneous action. [illegible] doses of Ipecac: or of some of the antimonial preparations such as Tartar Emetic, pulvis antimonialis &c. [illegible] or three hours are highly recommended by Dr Thomas.

Chapman however prefers giving the tartar [illegible], and [illegible] may be added to [illegible]. As part of the same treatment [illegible] Flannel should be constantly kept in the shape of a [illegible], [illegible] is [illegible] up a uniform degree of warmth and moisture over the surface of the abdomen which is [illegible] as a substitute for the warm bath [illegible] its [illegible], which [illegible] inconvenient. If the above measures should not be the desired means [illegible] the bowels [illegible] to the [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] when properly [illegible], [illegible] the stomach is irritable the pills should be made [illegible]

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they are administered as then they set easier on the stomach. These remedies when aided by a plentiful use of the diluent and demulcent beverages, such as barley water linseed tea rice water, toast water, &c. hardly ever fail to effect a cure.

If acidity in the alimentary canal be the cause of the disease, which is known by frequent eructations of air, depressing a hot, and disagreable sensation upon the fauces and mouth, griping pains in the bowels with discharges which recession is not followed by relaxation at the termination of the rectum. The absorbent medicines joined with opiates are to be used. Here the cretaceous julap joined with laudanum and given in such doses, as that each, may contain 8 or 10 drops of laudanum is very beneficial.

In this case lime water either alone, or in combination with new milk in great expressions has been of great service. The Alkalies, are recommended, and from their action on acids I should suppose, are of utility. The salt of Tartar is the one generally employed, and is given in a little broth in frequent doses.

It is sometimes produced by the sudden disappearance of some cutaneous eruption. The cure here consists in resto

[illegible] surface, in order to do this Diaphoretics should be resorted to and employed as was stated in the case of checked perspiration. A piece brandy, where there are no febrile symptoms, is sometimes of service here. [illegible]

If repelled gout be the cause of the disease, the cure must be effected, by recalling it to the extremities. In order to do this stimulating [illegible] should be made to the feet, such as Blisters, sinapisms, [illegible] obstinate, astringents in conjunction with opium [illegible] those most in vogue are Alum in doses of from V to X grs [illegible] in doses of from X to XX grs of the substance, and the Sugar of Lead in doses of from 2 to 3 grs with 1/2 a grain of opium, and repeated if necessary every 2 or 3 hours. Here a strong decoction of the Kino berry will be found beneficial. If the stomach [illegible] fail to retain the opium injections must be resorted to.

If new contraction from Dentition is the cause of the disease, it may be suffered to continue unless it produces great debility, [illegible] the gums should be scarified, and where the discharges are very copious some of the astringent medicines should be employed. The best of these is the Kino berry.

If it is produced by Worms, the anthelmintic medicines are to be administered. Where the [illegible], the chemistorium in the female [illegible] by copious bleeding with cupping or blistering is the most efficacious mode of treating the complaint.

When this disease attacks pregnant women it is to be considered as remote with danger and the most prudent course is made use of to prevent it. In this case the Doctory will be found of great importance nor should the other accidental diseases of women be forgotten. Care should be taken and some tonic medicine as the Peruvian Bark &c. in order to strengthen the bowels against a relapse of the disease.

Sometimes it arises from a diseased state of the liver, in this case the alterative, the [illegible] Mercury will be found some remedy of combatting the disease.

Where the disease assumes an chronic state and is more or less connected with a diseased state of the chylopoetic viscera attention must be paid to the state of the system. Whatever may be the cause from which it proceeds if there is a tense and corded pulse as is most commonly the case, venesection should be resorted to. The efficacy of this practice experience has taught and is now universally established

by the appearance of inflammation, rather of depletion. For is one bleeding always sufficient, as long as the condition of the system, and the strength of the patient admit, the remedy should be repeated. Dr Chapman speaks in such terms of cupping between the shoulders to the amount of 5 or 6 ounces, and of subsequent venesection to the amount of [V] or viij ℥ of blood, as a most valuable treatment. Emetics of Ipecac: should be given two or three times a week. These remedies says Dr Chapman are not to be indiscriminately used, when once given as such they are undoubtedly beneficial, but they introduce a new train of actions, remove the morbid associations on which the disease depends, and renovates the condition of the whole alimentary canal.

After the desired effects of the above remedies have been produced, the following prescription is of great use

℞ Rhubarb xxx grs

Ipecac: x grs

Opium V grs The whole to be made into X boluses one of which should be given every two or three hours during the day at visit and going to bed X grs of Opium should be given and its operation promoted by the use of warm

beverages.

[illegible] is to be avoided, [illegible] the use of the warm bath [illegible] and this should be rendered stimulating by the addition of cayenne pepper, mustard or common salt. Dr Chapman states that a very remarkable known a bath of brine cure Chronic Diarrhoea. This should be employed just before going to bed, and after the patient has entered bed he should be rubbed with a flesh brush until a glow is diffused over the whole body.

If the remedies above enumerated should prove ineffectual recourse should be had to some of the combinations of Opium. This medicine is peculiarly adapted to the present case. It is administered here with a view of its tonic effect. The following mode is very good 10 or 12 grs of alum combined with ½ a grain of Opium may be given 3 or 4 times during the 24 hours, in some cases a small quantity of Ipecac: may be added with un[illegible] [illegible] if the skin [illegible] the bowels have suffered by gripings.

Alum combined with [illegible] White vitriol in the shape of the nitrate solution has been very much extolled by [illegible] and

Thought

thought highly of by many other practitioners in this case. The dose of this mixture is from a teaspoonful to ℥ss every two hours. If much evacuation should be wished, diminish the quantity of Alum and increase that of the white vitriol & vice versa.

The Alum and white vitriol are sometimes given in equal proportions, and with the most beneficial effects.

The above prescriptions should be continued for a great length of time in order to prove beneficial. If vomiting be wished Chamomile tea should be employed along with it. If too much nausea is produced by the Medicine the dose must be diminished. If griping, or purging when not wished should be effected by the remedy, opium should be used to counteract it. The author of Dr Mosely says of the remedy. Dr Chapman thinks well of the medicine the his experience with it has been limited. He states that it is so nauseous a draught that few persons can continue it long enough to receive the full effects of it.

If the remedies enumerated above should not succeed, Mercury should be resorted to. This remedy is of great importance where the chylopoietic viscera are in a diseased state, and even when this is not the case the remedy by producing a new train of actions,

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proves of great benefit. The alterative effect very often removes all the [illegible], the remedy, if however it should not be sufficient the medicine should be pushed to a moderate salivation.

The next remedy to be considered is the use of Blisters these are highly recommended by all Practitioners. They may be applied to either of the extremities or abdomen. Dr. [illegible] found their alternate application first to the extremities then to the abdomen increased their efficacy considerably. To obtain their full effect they should be continued for a long time. These act on the principle of revulsion or by withdrawing the disease from the centre to the circumference, and as Dr. Chapman says the surface of the body and the bowels are in antagonizing powers, by creating irritation on the skin ~~[illegible]~~ it will remove indirectly the diseases of the alimentary canal which are accompanied by or depend on irritation of that part.

In old protracted cases of diarrhoea the opiates at times are of great utility, and of these the Tincture is considered the best. The dose is X or XV gtt every 3 or 4 hours. This dose may be gradually increased until it amounts to

℞. Green vitriol ʒ1

Gum Arabic q.s. Divide the Mass into XXX pills, 1 to be taken four, or five times a day.

Exercise taken in any way is of importance in this disease, but its efficacy is considerably increased when taken on horseback, especially if the patient be ~~taken~~ sent on a long journey.

As a dernier resort, a sea voyage to some more temperate climate should be recommended, this has sometimes effected cures where every thing else had been tried in vain.

Samuel Walter Washington
Virg.a
admitted March 2d 1820

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